

**RESOLUTION OF THE FLORIDA KEYS NATIONAL MARINE
SANCTUARY ADVISORY COUNCIL IN SUPPORT OF THE
“PERMANENT PROTECTION FOR FLORIDA ACT OF 2006”**

February 21, 2006

WHEREAS, the Florida Keys National Marine Sanctuary and Protection Act (Act) was passed by Congress and signed into law by President George H. Bush in 1990 creating the Florida Keys National Marine Sanctuary; and

WHEREAS, the Florida Keys extend approximately 220 miles southwest from the southern tip of the Florida peninsula; and

WHEREAS, adjacent to the Florida Keys land mass are located spectacular, unique, and nationally significant marine environments, including seagrass meadows, mangrove islands, and extensive living coral reefs; and

WHEREAS, these marine environments support rich biological communities possessing extensive conservation, recreational, commercial, ecological, historical, research, educational, and esthetic values which give this area special national significance; and

WHEREAS, these environments are the marine equivalent of tropical rain forests in that they support high levels of biological diversity, are fragile and easily susceptible to damage from human activities, and possess high value to human beings if properly conserved; and

WHEREAS, these marine environments are subject to damage and loss of their ecological integrity from a variety of sources of disturbance; and

WHEREAS, the Act specifically prohibits the leasing, exploration, development or production of minerals or hydrocarbons within the Sanctuary recognizing the damaging impact such activities, including the unintended release or spilling of oil residue would have upon the resources of the Sanctuary; and

WHEREAS, scientific analysis has determined that the Loop Current travels through the north-eastern waters of the Gulf of Mexico, bringing currents into the Florida Keys National Marine Sanctuary; and

WHEREAS, the Loop Current is known to traverse through parts of Lease Area 181 in the Gulf of Mexico; and

WHEREAS, a moratorium that exists on Lease Area 181 is scheduled to expire in 2007; and

WHEREAS, there are a number of actions pending in the U.S. Congress to allow leasing, exploration or development of hydrocarbons within Lease Area 181; and

WHEREAS, ‘The Permanent Protection for Florida Act of 2006’ provides the highest level of protection of currently pending legislation to avoid hydrocarbon spills to be transported by the Loop Current to the resources of the Florida Keys National Marine Sanctuary; and

WHEREAS, the Advisory Council of the Florida Keys National Marine Sanctuary was established in the Act by the Secretary of Commerce in consultation with the Governor of the State of Florida and the Board of County Commissioners of Monroe County, Florida to provide counsel on actions required to protect the resources of the Sanctuary, and

WHEREAS, the Advisory Council has reviewed the ‘‘Permanent Protection for Florida Act of 2006’’ and engaged in extensive discussion regarding this and other proposals to allow hydrocarbon leasing, exploration, development or production in a formally noticed Council meeting, and

WHEREAS, the Act requires the agencies of the United States to cooperate fully to achieve the necessary protection of the Sanctuary resources;

THEREFORE: The Florida Keys National Marine Sanctuary Advisory Council supports the ‘‘Permanent Protection for Florida Act of 2006’’ that has been introduced to the United States Congress by Florida Senator’s Bill Nelson and Mel Martinez and urge it’s passage in this Congressional session. Further, The Council recommends that the Board of County Commissioners of Monroe County pass a similar resolution at its next regularly scheduled Commission meeting to provide broad-based support for the protection of the unique resources of the Florida Keys.

Passed unanimously on this date: February 21, 2006